

Media Release

Contact:

**Julie Munsell, Office of Communications
(501) 682-8650**

For Immediate Release

April 2, 2009

Former Arkansas foster child selected for D.C. intern program



**Travise Fisher joins
Governor Beebe on the
day he signed Act
391 into law.**

Travise Fisher, a 21-year-old man who was a foster child in the care of The Arkansas Department of Human Services from the age of five, is getting an opportunity offered to few college students.

The Batesville resident will be the first college student from Arkansas to take part in a special congressional internship program for foster children beginning in May.

For two months he will serve as a congressional intern in Washington, D.C. Fisher will be one of 16 students, and the only one from Arkansas, who will be part of an intern program specifically designed to give foster children an inside look at Washington and further their ambitions as share their experiences in the foster care system with congressional leaders. He learned of the internship program from his

attorney ad litem, a guardian appointed to him by the state. He was one of dozens of applicants for the paid internship. The field was narrowed to 20 applicants and then the top 16 candidates were accepted for the program.

The Congressional Foster Youth Internship (FYI) Program is sponsored by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, a non-profit agency. Started in 2003, the FYI program instructs these young adults in how best to bring their unique perspective and resilient spirit to bear as advocates for the needs of other waiting children. The FYI Alumni Network now represents more than 80 former interns who have used their FYI experience as a foundation for a wide variety of distinguished careers.

-more-

Travise -2-2-2-2-2

More than half a million children reside in the U.S. foster care system and approximately 129,000 of these children are eligible for adoption. In Arkansas, there are more than 500 children available for adoption. Many of these children spend their teenage years in the foster care system, moving from home to home but never finding permanency. In 2006, an estimated 26,000 young people “aged out” of the U.S. foster care system. Many are only 18 years old and still need support and services. Several foster care alumni studies show that without a lifelong connection to a caring adult, these older youth are often left vulnerable to a host of adverse situations.

The Congressional Foster Youth Internship Program facilitates the awareness needed to engage members in reforming the system by uniting lawmakers and foster care veterans. These foster care veterans are children who were either adopted after the age of fourteen or who were in foster care on their eighteenth birthday. Each intern is provided regular interaction with Members of Congress and their staff, providing opportunities to share their unique perspectives on foster care. This interaction is instrumental in raising awareness about the importance of legislation that addresses the needs of foster children, as well as the unintended consequences of the system. After their time on Capitol Hill, the interns remain an instrumental link and resource to many Congressional offices. Some interns have even joined the Congressional staff after their internship.

Travise, originally from West Memphis, graduated from Batesville High School in 2007. He currently lives in Batesville and attends the University of Arkansas Community College of Batesville full time where he is a sophomore. He is a senate member of the UACCB Student Government Association. He also works at Home Depot. He plans to go on to an Arkansas university and study business. Travise “aged” out of the foster care system at age 18 without being adopted. He remained a part of the DHS Division of Children and Family Services Independent Living Program which helps foster children transition to adulthood. He attends college with the help of Educational Training Vouchers provided through the Division of Children and Family Services and other financial aid he has secured.

Travise has continued his connection to the Arkansas foster care system and has worked to improve it by serving as a member of the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Children and Family Services Youth Advisory Board. The board makes recommendations regarding foster care issues and most recently supported passage of Act 391, the Arkansas Foster Youth Transitional Plan, which outlines a formal plan to be developed for each foster child in the state’s care to help them move from foster care to adulthood.

-more-

Travise -3-3-3-3-3-3

“I’m excited,” Travise said about his upcoming internship. “There are not that many people that get to go to Washington on this type of program. I want to make the most of it.” The name of the congressional member for whom Travise will serve as an intern will be announced soon. While in Washington, D.C., the interns will live at the Catholic University of America campus. In addition to their internship work, they will have ample opportunity to soak in the history and culture of the nation’s capital and surrounding area during their stay.

-30-